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FAIR VIEW GIRLS' HOME

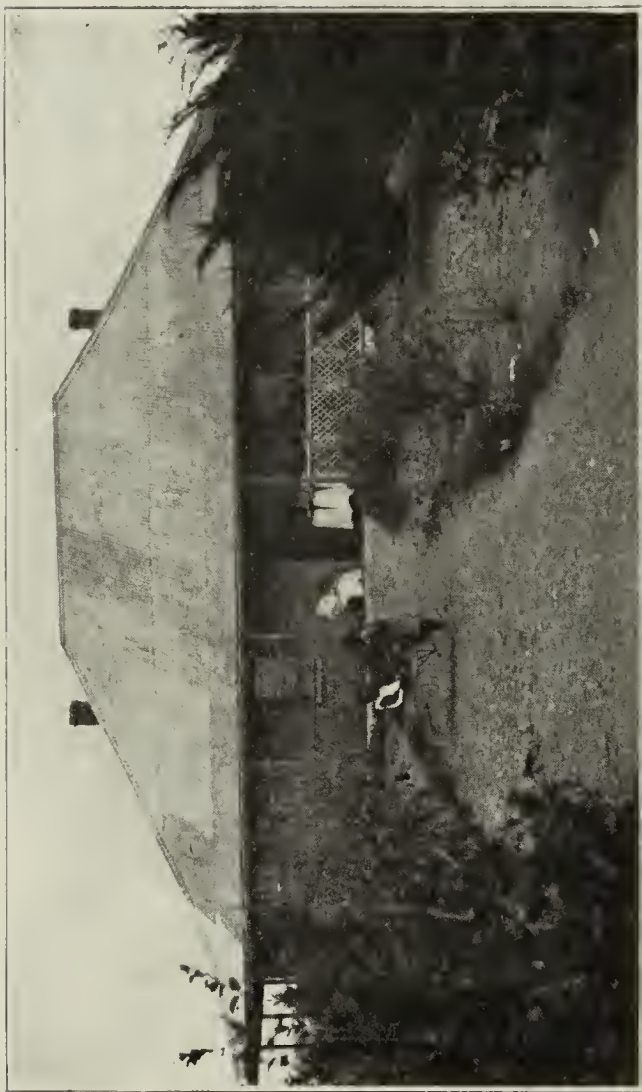
at Fair View Mission Station
in Natal, South Africa

By F. Grace Allen



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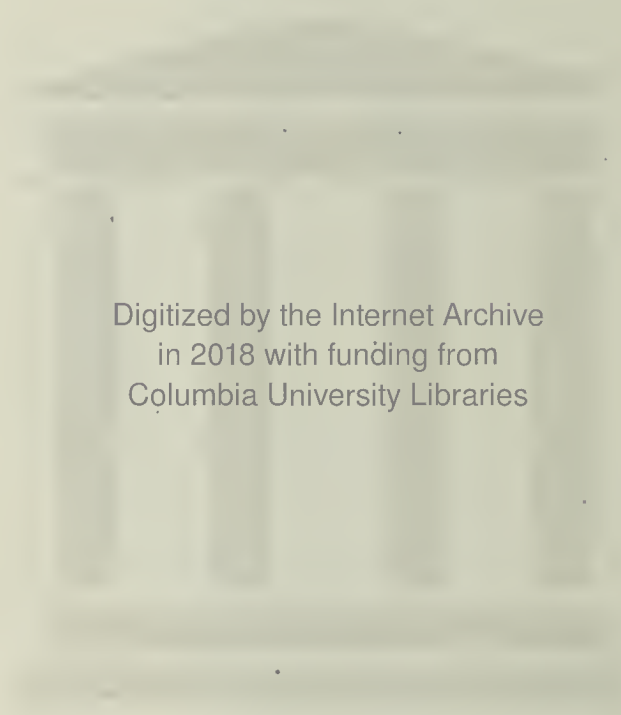


GIRLS' HOME, FAIR VIEW, SOUTH AFRICA

Introductory Note

The following description of the Fair View Girls' Home in Natal, South Africa, represents a cause the worthiness of which should commend it to every Christian into whose hands this tract may fall. Miss Allen, the writer, has labored in South Africa over twenty years, and has been identified with the Girls' Home from the beginning of its history. She has the general charge of the Home and of the Girls' School, in both of which her work has been greatly blessed. The following account of the Home and its work is published in the hope that its circulation will so extend information and increase interest regarding this cause as to result in multiplied and enlarged contributions toward its support.

E. L. H.



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Fair View Girls' Home

When the Fair View Girls' Home was first started its object was to provide a refuge for heathen girls who run away from their homes in the kraals, or heathen villages, because their parents refuse to allow them to attend school or church.

To understand the pressing need for such an institution as this something of the heathen girl's early life and environment must be known. If you wish to see amid what surroundings the little Zulu girl first opens her bright, black eyes upon life, come with me and visit a typical Zulu hut. You will need to get down on your hands and knees in order to enter the small door-way. Once inside, it will take your eyes some time to get accustomed to the dim light, for there are no windows. Soon you will see that you are in a circular room. The walls are covered on the inside with clay. You will notice that the furnishings are decidedly simple. Probably a large wooden mortar for pounding the corn, an earthen pot for carrying water and cooking, an ax for use in felling trees, a hoe for garden work, and perhaps a blanket or two, made of grass or the bark of the rubber-tree.

Near the fire-place, his back resting against one of the posts which uphold the hut, you will be quite likely to see the Numzana, or head-man sitting. The fire-place, too, is very simple, merely an oblong hollow in the earth floor, with a margin of smooth polished earth around it to keep the ashes in. To the right of the doorway may be sitting several men, for this is the men's side; and several women to the right, or women's side. Children run about all over the hut, listening to all kinds of filthy conversation which is freely carried on before them. In such surroundings as these the little Zulu girl grows up, destitute of every influence that will develop her moral or religious character.

As soon as she is large enough to carry a baby on her back she is made a nurse-girl, and carries her baby brother or sister about from morning till night. Free from all parental restraint she runs about with other children and soon learns to lie and deceive and to practise many wicked heathen customs. As she grows older the care of the baby is assigned to her older sister and then the girl is free to ramble as she pleases with her young companions, and idle away her time.

Perhaps on one of her rambles she will stray into a kraal meeting out of curiosity to hear what the missionary is saying. The gospel message touches her heart and she

feels a desire to become a Christian. But she dares not let her desire be known, for if she does, the news will soon reach her father's home and she will be beaten, ridiculed and closely watched.

She has often heard her father say that he will have no Christians around his kraal, so she knows it is useless to ask him to allow her to become a Christian. Her conviction keeps growing deeper, until sometimes her mind is in such distress that she has no appetite and cannot rest day or night. There is no one to teach her how to pray, and she knows no way of getting rid of her burden. But she has heard of the mission station! She will go there! So watching her chance, when the family are all away at a beer-drink, or at a distant garden, she slips away and comes to the mission. Often she persuades one or more of her young friends to come with her. It is not likely that they will go to the mission station nearest their home, as that would be too handy should their parents wish to come and take them away. Some of these girls come forty or fifty miles, traveling by night and sleeping on the ground in the bush. Some morning bright and early, the girl will make her appearance at the Home. Clad in an old cotton blanket, her hair besmeared with grease and red clay, tired and worn with her long journey, and her anxiety, she is

truly a pitiable object as she stands at the door of the mission school. But she has come among friends. Smiling black faces peep out from all the doors and windows, and a crowd of interested and sympathizing girls gather around her, asking her all manner of questions: Where does she live? Who are her parents? What caused her to come, etc.? Then whispering to her that she will be kindly treated, they escort her to the bath-room, where they scrub her vigorously, removing the grease and vermin from her head and body. They take away her dirty blanket and dress her in clothes which they supply from their own scanty wardrobes. Then they take her into the school-room and show her the pictures on the wall, the blackboards and books—all marvelous things to her. How pleased she is when they take the Zulu chart and point out the syllables to her and she finds she can speak them as they call them over to her. How hard she tries to do everything she is asked to do! How eagerly she listens as the teacher or one of the scholars takes her alone and reads the Word of God and explains the way of salvation to her! She is taught to pray and to confess her sins and usually she is soon rejoicing in Christ as her Savior.

The various girls in the Home may be roughly grouped into three classes, and by

far the larger number are in the class just described. The next largest class is that of girls who seek refuge at the Home because their parents are trying to force them to marry against their own wills. When a Zulu girl is married the father receives as a gift from the bridegroom ten head of cattle. If a man has the cattle to give for his wife the father does not care in the least whether the girl loves him or not. It often happens that the girl is in love with a young man who has no cattle, but some old man who already has two or three wives will take a fancy to her. As he has the cattle to give for her at once, her father, mother, and friends will try to persuade her to marry the old man. If she refuses, they will try to force her to marry him, and oftentimes they will make her life so miserable that she will run away and come to the mission station to escape them. We have had a number of such girls in the Home. While these girls are not nearly so susceptible to Christian influence as the former class, still a number of them have been converted.

Daughters of native Christians, especially those of the native evangelists, form the third class. Their parents pay their board and also clothe them and pay for their books.

Occasionally, a young man who is a Christian falls in love with a heathen girl.

Of course he wishes his wife to become a Christian too, so he persuades her to come to the Home. He also wishes her to learn to live in the civilized way. If they are engaged to be married, her parents will allow her to go and the young man will pay for her clothes and board.

Even after the girl is converted how much remains to be done! Old habits and customs have to be overcome and new ones formed. Her mind has accumulated a great mass of rubbish, of superstition and prejudice, and this must be removed. To attain this end a regular system of training is carried on. Certain hours each day are set apart for school, for garden work, sewing and housework, all under careful supervision. Much of the food for the table is grown in the gardens, which are cultivated by the girls themselves. They are taught mat-weaving and to cut and sew their own dresses, and to do all the cooking and household work of the school family.

A weekly prayer-meeting is held at the Home. The girls attend this meeting and also the regular church services on Sunday, and Sabbath-school at the mission church. We do our very best to make these girls useful and self-reliant, as well as practical, thorough Christians.

Herewith are given a few sketches illustrating the work of this Home in its effect upon the lives of some who have lived in it:

MOMBANGO, whose name suggests a family quarrel, first became interested in the gospel through her sister Mazie. Mazie had run away from home two or three years before, and, although she had been threatened and beaten, and dragged home once or twice, had persisted in returning to school, and was soundly converted. She would talk with her friends about the Lord, and especially with her sister, Nombango, whom she taught to pray. The first time I heard her pray in public Nombango made a very intelligent, earnest prayer. She first made her appearance on the mission station at the Wednesday afternoon seekers' class, wrapped in a thin cotton blanket, her only covering. When she stood up to testify, she threw her blanket off from her shoulders and showed us her back, all striped from a recent beating. "Here," said she, the tears streaming down her cheeks, "are the stripes I have received for Jesus' sake." She was soon converted, and not long afterwards ran away from her kraal and came to the Home.

Her father, who was a very intelligent heathen man, followed her, and after trying in vain to persuade him to allow her to remain, we let her return with him, upon his promising that she should be permitted to be a Christian at home. But he soon broke his promise, burnt up the clothes she had been given at the mission, and

forbade her going to school or church. Then she ran away to another mission station, farther away, in the hope of escaping discovery. But her father followed her there, and sent a policeman to bring her home. She has been before magistrates, and has been threatened with imprisonment if she did not stay at home, but she persisted in the determination to save her soul, and ran away a number of times, until at last her father became weary of following her and allowed her to remain at the Home. For several years she has attended the mission school, and she is a model Christian, and a refined, intelligent young woman. She is fitting herself to be a teacher in the mission school.

JOSEPHINE was converted when a small child, at a tent meeting held in her neighborhood. After her conversion she had a great longing to go to school and learn to read the Word of God. But while her father did not object to her attending services on the Sabbath, he would not permit her to go to school. So she determined to live a Christian in her home. Her father would not allow her to wear clothes, so she washed the red clay out of her hair and blanket, and for three years lived a consistent Christian life among her heathen friends. At the end of that time, seeing that she was not likely to find opportunity to attend school, she ran

away and came to the Home. She was accompanied by another girl, a relative, who had been converted at the same time. Many times did the friends of those girls try to get them away from the Home. Sometimes they would coax, sometimes threaten, but the girls persisted, until at last their heathen relatives ceased to molest them. For five years Josephine has been in the Home. In all that time not once has she shown aught but the most humble, Christian spirit; a tireless worker among the girls, watching over the erring ones, assisting the weak, and leading the new ones into the light. On Friday afternoons she goes to her home, five miles distant, and remains over the Sabbath, assisting the native pastor to hold meetings, besides teaching a class in Sunday-school. She has won her whole family, consisting of father, mother, and younger sister, to Christ. Her great desire is to be a teacher and a winner of souls.

MARTHA MQADI. My first acquaintance with Martha was at the time of her birth. Her father was working on my hut, when word came to him that his wife was dead. He started off at once on the run, and I followed, with my native girl, Martha. When we arrived we found everything in confusion at the kraal. The woman had not died, but fainted. By the time we reached the spot she had revived, and they

had her outside of the hut and were pouring cold water over her. Crawling into the low doorway on my hands and knees, I found an old woman holding a tiny baby girl in her arms. She and the others were so much interested in the condition of the mother that they had not thought much about the baby. Martha built a fire as quickly as possible, it being winter and the weather quite chilly. Seating myself on the floor in front of the cheerful blaze, I took the tiny girl, who had not a scrap of clothing about her, wrapped her in my flannel dress skirt and held her close to the fire. Martha soon had some nice gruel made for the mother, who ate it with a relish, while the other women exclaimed, "How wise are these white people! Who would think of preparing food for her now?"

This little girl, who was named "Martha" by her father, in honor of the one who attended her at her birth, is at present in the Girls' Home. She is fifteen years old. Her father, who was not a Christian at the time of her birth, is now a faithful preacher of the gospel. Martha herself is a Christian, and an intelligent and interesting pupil who, we hope, will in time be a teacher.

The expense of keeping one of these girls in the Home for a year, including board and clothes, amounts to \$20. A few

are supported by friends at home. We should be glad to have more thus provided for. More room is needed and must be provided or we shall have to turn some away, and we cannot bear the thought of doing that. At present we have seventy girls while our building will accommodate only thirty comfortably.

One of the pressing needs of the Home is a water plant, for the purpose of conveying water from a stream, a quarter of a mile distant. The girls are obliged to carry on their heads all water used at the Home, up a long hill of about a hundred feet elevation. In addition to pumping water a suitable power plant would enable us to grind grain, operate a laundry, and, by means of irrigation, double our garden products.

Any one desiring to contribute to the enlarging and maintenance of the Fair View Girls' Home, or wishing to contribute or pledge the amount necessary to provide for one girl (or more than one) in this Home for a year, or for a term of years, should write to Rev. B. Winget, Missionary Secretary, 1132 Washington Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois.

